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ABSTRACT

This newsletter offers the text of an address by David L. Dodson, President of MDC, Inc., to the presidents and officers of the Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges (SACTJC) on December 6, 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia. The talk focuses on MDC's fall 2000 report, the "State of the South." Research for the report illuminated two issues: (1) the continuing trend toward bimodal economic opportunity in the region, with the benefits sharply divided based on geography and skill levels; and (2) the impact of unprecedented foreign immigration on the region's institutions and communities. According to data assembled by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, rapid job growth will continue in the region over the next decade. The majority of new jobs, however, will be created in occupations with low educational requirements and correspondingly low wages. Of the 10 occupations that will provide the largest number of new jobs by 2005, only two--general management and registered nursing--will require even an associate's or bachelor's degree. Additionally, large numbers of Latino immigrants who are employed in sectors of the economy with low educational barriers to entry are presenting new challenges for educational institutions. These factors necessitate new programs in the South's colleges. Offers suggestions for adapting to these challenges. (NB)

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SACJTC February 2000 Newsletter

Allen Edwards, Editor
Volume 34, Number 1

Overcoming the Challenges of Globalization: Community Colleges and the South's Economic Future

An Address by David L. Dodson, President, MDC, Inc.
Atlanta, Georgia • December 6, 1999

It is a great pleasure for me to follow in the footsteps of the late George Autry, MDC's founding president, and William Winter, our current board chairman, to address this gathering of presidents and officers of SACTJC member colleges. MDC's institutional mission has intersected with the work of community and technical colleges throughout our 30-year history. George Autry was long convinced that the South's community colleges are uniquely positioned to transform the life chances of people put most at risk by economic change. Through the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative, which MDC manages and in which several of the colleges represented here participate, MDC continues to explore and support the leadership role that community colleges can play in connecting people with jobs through education and training.

In the fall of 2000, MDC will publish the third edition of our biennial report to the region, the State of the South (SOS). My talk today will focus on two issues that our research for SOS is illuminating:

- The continuing trend toward bimodal economic opportunity in the region, with the benefits sharply divided based on geography and skill levels.
- The impact of unprecedented foreign immigration on the region's institutions and communities.

Economic Change: Are We Done Yet?

Over the last 20 years, the 14 states that MDC examines in SOS have experienced colossal growth and transformation. Nearly four in every 10 jobs created in the U.S. during that period were created in this region, stimulating a dramatic rise in regional prosperity. For most of the century, well into the 1970s, the South's economy looked very different from that of the rest of the nation, with a higher concentration of farming; low-wage, nondurable manufacturing; extractive industries; and military employment. Today,

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the structure and distribution of the employment in the region look much like those of the rest of the country. And just like the rest of the country, we are experiencing powerful, accelerating shifts in the nature of jobs and work.

According to data assembled by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, rapid job growth will continue in the region over the next decade as it has in the past 20 years, but with important distinctions. In terms of absolute numbers, the most new jobs will be created in occupations with low educational requirements and correspondingly low wages, such as basic retail and housekeeping. Of the 10 occupations that will provide the largest number of new jobs by 2005, only two—general management and registered nursing—will require even an associate's or bachelor's degree. At the high end of the wage spectrum, the region will experience a rapid rate of job growth, but the numbers of jobs will be comparatively small.

We are already seeing the impact of these trends in North Carolina, where we have recently begun to shed large numbers of jobs in routine manufacturing, many of them the economic mainstays of our rural areas, while we simultaneously add smaller numbers of high-paying manufacturing jobs, mostly in metropolitan areas. The fact that states like North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama can capture increased numbers of sought-after, high-skill manufacturing jobs testifies to our region's continuing competitiveness in fierce global competition.

Yet not all people and places will benefit equally as our economy reinvents itself. Rural communities, particularly those heavily dependent on traditional manufacturing and agriculture or lacking the scenic amenities to become tourist or retirement destinations, will face the likely loss of their economic vitality and the out-migration of their young people. And undereducated people, urban and rural, will find an ever-widening gap between themselves and family-sustaining, higher-wage employment.

Diversified Demography

Now lay over these economic and occupational trends the demographic restructuring of the South brought on by foreign immigration. In the 1970s and '80s, the South was a magnet for domestic migrants from the North and other regions of the U.S. Today, in-migration to the South is global, supplying workers not just to our farms and construction sites but to our hospitals and the laboratories of Austin and Research Triangle Park as well. Since 1996, more than half of all immigrants to the South, domestic and foreign, have come from Latin America. Latino immigration promises to transform our region as dramatically as air-conditioning and the abolition of Jim Crow laws did in the last century. But the smooth accommodation of our new Latino neighbors will not be automatic. Consider these challenges:

- New Latino immigrants tend increasingly to be less well educated than past immigrants to the region. While high school graduates predominated among all immigrants to the South from 1990-1998, less well-educated immigrants, the vast majority from Latin America, will be in the majority going forward. This presents

a huge challenge for public schools and postsecondary institutions working to connect new immigrants to further education and better jobs.

- Latino immigration is changing the demographic complexion of parts of the South that have been biracial in culture and identity for two centuries. This is raising major adaptive challenges for community institutions of all types, as Latinos move from being migrants to permanent residents and neighbors. How do we manage a new round of cultural and ethnic immigration when we have still not finished the work of black/white coexistence?
- Latino immigrants are disproportionately employed in sectors of the economy with low educational barriers to entry. These very sectors are the most vulnerable to economic change and to the destruction of jobs by the introduction of technology. In communities where jobs are scarce, competition for employment with lower-skilled African-Americans and whites is already sparking ethnic tensions. How do we create opportunities for upward mobility for both new immigrants and undereducated natives in an economy that is likely to have more jobs at the low end of the wage spectrum than at the high end?

The Adaptive Challenge

Rarely in our history has the South been asked to address the challenge of widespread cultural adaptation while simultaneously dealing with profound economic volatility. Yet these twin challenges face us now, and community colleges have a special role to play in their resolution, a role that will require skillful institutional and community leadership by colleges on several fronts:

- We will need new programs, especially intensified ESL and Spanish language instruction, to make learning welcoming and relevant for new immigrants. Latino activists report that placing translators in classrooms for Latino students is a useful interim solution, but that bilingual instruction should be a long-term priority for educational institutions. Colleges in communities that have been traditionally mono- or biracial will struggle with this challenge. Some colleges have addressed the deficit of bilingual instructors by turning to community members to teach ESL, thereby drawing on a community resource and building trust with immigrant communities by fielding instructors who look more like them.
- We will need new partnerships between colleges and community organizations that have the trust and respect of immigrant communities and that are located where immigrants live. "What good is the claim that you're an 'open door' institution," said one Latino community worker, "if immigrants are afraid to walk through your door" because the fear of deportation is so deeply associated with mainstream organizations.
- We will need new arrangements with employers, particularly in the realm of workplace-based instruction. "Men and women in the Latino community are working two and three jobs. Sunday afternoon is the only time many have free, and they won't use it to go to a community college. The instruction has to come to them on the job." Employers ranging from Marriott hotels to hosiery mills in

Randolph County, North Carolina, have found creative ways to deliver work-relevant instruction on the job through technology that downplays the need for mastery of English.

- We will need aggressive efforts to rebuild the traditional culture of the Southern workplace to accommodate new immigrants. Language instruction and cultural training for supervisors are urgent priorities to maximize workplace productivity and diffuse potential cross-cultural tensions.
- Beyond the issue of immigration itself, we will need fresh thinking about economic priorities at the community and regional level. Given the creative destruction at work in the Southern economy and our rapidly diversifying population, how do we create local and regional economies that will offer a full measure of opportunity to all workers and citizens? Where should a region invest its education and economic development resources to produce the highest return? These are hard questions to answer in a period of economic volatility, but community colleges should be part of the dialogue and the response. The Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative is demonstrating how community colleges can contribute to economic leadership in the rural South and beyond.

It is hard to imagine a more exciting time for two-year colleges or any period where your imagination and skills will be more urgently needed. MDC wishes you success in your work and stands ready to be your partner in the South's continuing transformation.

Number of Immigrants to the South, Age 25+, by Educational Attainment:

	Less Than High School	Some High School	College	Bachelor's	Postgraduate
1975-80	148,840	164,440	153,360	70,960	89,760
1985-90	198,685	173,973	231,757	139,955	104,752
1990-95	231,585	203,539	223,470	166,057	86,671
1995-98	166,912	150,830	154,046	150,493	138,705

Number of Migrants by Educational Attainment, Age 25+, 1990-95

Place of Birth	From	To	Less Than High School	High School	Some College	Bachelor's	Postgraduate

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Native Born	South	Northeast	21,690	111,173	80,308	91,700	61,820
	Northeast	South	93,784	240,554	233,198	173,846	104,481
	South	Midwest	65,575	175,180	148,142	161,970	58,665
	Midwest	South	144,591	263,629	264,388	179,035	113,176
	South	West	19,424	139,881	194,534	132,798	108,594
	West	South	80,152	203,121	309,687	156,826	123,947
Foreign Born	South	Northeast	4,712	8,854	4,337	12,962	4,426
	Northeast	South	35,830	52,625	31,475	31,179	17,052
	South	Midwest	4,362	4,945	12,515	2,467	4,263
	Midwest	South	28,177	10,279	16,967	18,024	13,206
	South	West	25,617	24,258	12,588	10,020	2,561
	West	South	45,703	20,478	32,337	16,515	5,941

Number of Migrants by Educational Attainment, Age 25+, 1995-98

Place of Birth	From	To	Less Than High School	High School	Some College	Bachelor's	Postgraduate
Native Born	South	Northeast	29,953	125,840	116,156	116,882	36,182
	Northeast	South	57,794	187,980	148,209	138,557	73,903
	South	Midwest	68,419	176,365	158,919	127,482	69,732
	Midwest	South	72,457	215,959	231,148	148,699	86,313
	South	West	49,595	153,898	180,704	118,956	65,480
	West	South	51,308	199,703	171,859	125,049	60,181
Foreign Born	South	Northeast	15,478	31,691	14,697	14,744	38,065
	Northeast	South	24,137	36,740	42,425	20,172	21,729
	South	Midwest	6,589	10,749	3,734	4,570	11,926
	Midwest	South	16,968	15,493	6,751	16,857	8,511

	South	West	29,930	8,639	14,128	10,387	13,939
	West	South	32,834	32,304	10,340	26,747	9,392

Educational Attainment for the South, 1990

Less Than High School	15,611,863	28.7%
High School	15,736,041	29.0%
Some College	12,811,059	23.6%
Bachelor's	6,638,974	12.2%
Postgraduate	3,537,648	6.5%
Total	54,335,585	100%

Biography of David L. Dodson

David L. Dodson is president of MDC, Inc. Since joining the firm in 1987, he has been project director for major initiatives in school reform, workforce development, and community economic development in the Carolinas, the Deep South, and Appalachia. Currently he is leading MDC's effort to transfer the Ford Foundation's Rural Community College Initiative to Africa. In addition, he has served as consultant on community capacity building and leadership development to the W.K. Kellogg and Casey foundations as well as the Pew Civic Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Dodson is co-author of The Rural Futures Program: A Guide for Trainers and Building Communities of Conscience and Conviction: Lessons from MDC's Recent Experience. He has been visiting lecturer at the Hart Leadership Program, Terry Sanford Institute for Public Policy at Duke University, and trustee/director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, the Center for Community Self-Help, and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

Dodson studied at Yale College, Yale Divinity School, and Yale School of Organization and Management in the areas of architecture and planning, ethics and theology, and public and private management. Previously he served as executive director of the Cummins Engine Foundation and director of Corporate Responsibility for the Cummins Engine Company.

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